

2017-2018 Academic Year

Note: The research questions and topics listed below are offered for consideration by faculty and students. If you have other ideas for possible research, the Academic Alliance staff is prepared to work with you if our assistance is desired. The first grouping (A-F) of topics is based on the discussion during the 2017 USSTRATCOM Deterrence Symposium. The second grouping (G-M) is comprised of enduring and emerging topics of interest.

2017 USSTRATCOM DETERRENCE SYMPOSIUM PANEL QUESTIONS

A. How do we develop a unified international effort for North Korea?

- What constitutes a “unified” effort?
- Who are the necessary vs. desirable participants in such an effort? For example, is China required?
- What are the appropriate structures? Does the U.S. need to be in the lead? Would the U.S. support another state or entity leading the effort?
- Does a unified effort mean an equal effort? If not, how will it be viewed on the international stage?
- What are the deterrence and assurance implications of a unilateral or unified effort?
- Assess the advantages, disadvantages, and implications of the denuclearization, peninsula unification, and regime change policies regarding the DPRK.
- How might all elements of national power/leverage be integrated into a cohesive, unified approach to best achieve policy option selected regarding the DPRK problem?
- Is there a role for economic incentives in the deterrence & assurance campaign for DPRK? Could a tailored “Marshall Plan” solve the DPRK problem?

B. What are the assurance and deterrence implications of the Third Offset Strategy?

- How does pursuit of the 3rd Offset Strategy affect strategic stability? Does this strategy incite or dampen potential competition?
- Is a 3rd Offset Strategy arms race possible/likely?
- What are likely adversary and allied reactions to U.S. 3rd Offset Strategy capability developments?
- Are there 3rd Offset Strategy capabilities that would be better to not develop (i.e., are there capabilities we would prefer a potential adversary not to have)? If yes, are arms control or weapon type prohibitions feasible approaches?
- What is (or should be) the strategy underpinning the development of the 3rd Offset?

- What are the proliferation challenges of the 3rd Offset strategy?
- Does the 3rd Offset create new asymmetries that can be exploited by adversaries?
- Does the low cost and commercial availability of 3rd Offset tools imply a more level playing field and less lengthy period of U.S. dominance?
- Could 3rd Offset unintended consequences negatively impact first strike stability, geopolitical stability, or crisis stability?
- How might 3rd Offset developments and/or unintended consequences lessen or negate the nuclear deterrent?
- How has China's response to U.S. 2nd Offset capabilities impacted U.S. deterrence & assurance?
- How might different governmental structures and/or government-civilian relationships affect how a state employs deterrence?
- How might 3rd offset strategies impact the necessity of recapitalization of the nuclear triad?
- How might 3rd offset strategies impact NC3 reliability and subsequently credible deterrence?

C. Should we evolve international partnerships to achieve deterrence and assurance effects?

- Should the NATO model be used elsewhere to achieve desired deterrence and assurance effects? Are other models better suited to other regions and problem sets?
- In today's highly interconnected world, does it make sense to have separate economic, trade, and security treaty structures and mechanisms?
- Do geographically based treaty structures make sense in a highly interconnected world where geography may be less significant than other factors?
- As more countries become global players, are regional treaty structures appropriate? Do treaty structures need to be adversary based?
- What conditions are best suited to bi-lateral relationships/frameworks and what conditions are best suited to multilateral relationships/frameworks?
- Should states treat nuclear deterrence the same way they treat conventional deterrence?
- Is there a need for total cohesion on nuclear issues within partnerships and alliances?
- What new partnerships and additional capabilities should be sought?
- What preparations and/or action(s) should be taken in response to Russia's INF Treaty violations?

- Assess how the treaty structures and relationships impact collaboration on deterrence thought and planning?

D. What are the implications of seemingly conflicting approaches across all domains-thresholds & redlines vs. ambiguity?

- Thresholds & Redlines vs. Ambiguity – Does one or the other offer a more effective means to assure? To deter? Is the effectiveness consistent across domains (e.g. nuclear, conventional, space, or cyber)?
- Are redlines universal (or general) or are they always situationally dependent?
- If redlines are desired, are they equivalent? Do redlines have “degrees” of importance? Does the response to a “crossed redline” have to be the same?
- What sorts of redlines might be useful? And, must they be known?
- Does the U.S. (and other countries) have firm redlines?
- What is the implication of unenforced redlines?
- If some deterrent threats should be ambiguous while others need to be more defined, how should multi-domain deterrent capabilities be put together (e.g. conventional and nuclear) with regard to red lines?

E. What are deterrence and assurance implications of potential responses to adversary use of a nuclear weapon?

- What constitutes nuclear “use”?
- What considerations might influence a decision to use or not use a nuclear weapon in response?
- Does adversary nuclear use require a nuclear response?
- Do military or political considerations take precedence?
- What are the second (really nth) order implications of the response decision? For example, if a nuclear weapon isn’t used in response, what lessons might be learned by others?
- Does adversary use of a nuclear weapon fundamentally change U.S. (and allied) stake in the conflict? More generally, how might different potential adversary uses of a nuclear weapon affect U.S. (and allied) stake?
- How might “novel” nuclear weapon use (e.g. demonstration, EMP, limited use) affect U.S. response?

F. Is strategic stability a function of numbers or policies?

- Is numeric parity a necessary and/or sufficient condition for strategic stability?

- What policies contribute to/detract from strategic stability?
 - In the presence of assured destructive capability by one side, what are the implications of perceived “capability gaps” on strategic stability?
 - Are policies and numbers directly or inversely related relative to strategic stability?
 - More generally, do actions or words have a greater effect on strategic stability?
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GENERAL CATEGORIES

G. Deterrence and Assurance Theory

- Is "strategic stability" still a viable foundational approach for international relations, or is a different approach more appropriate? What are the deterrence-assurance implications for the various approaches?
- What effects result when a new nuclear state arises on the international scene? How does proliferation affect immediate neighbors, as well as the international community at large? What changes occur in deterrence relationships between the new nuclear state and its neighbors/neighborhood and the international community?
- What are the unique challenges to re-establishing deterrence after nuclear use? How does the challenge change in the event of a nuclear exchange?
- Given that it's in the interests of the U.S. and its allies to deter a nuclear attack rather than reacting to one, what policies, statements, capabilities, or actions assure allies and deter adversaries.
- From a holistic approach, how might the U.S. bridge the gaps between military and civilian capabilities into integrated U.S. national security policy, assurance, and deterrence strategy?
- Can deterrence and assurance campaign effectiveness be evaluated? Develop and describe a suggested assessment model.

H. Integration

- How can integration be fostered at lower levels at commands, as opposed to residing solely with the commander?
- How can deterrence messaging be coordinated and integrated across DOD and with State and Treasury, again at levels below senior leadership?
- Are there systems of rewards (or perhaps general risk aversion) that preclude leadership from allowing or fostering integration at lower levels?

- What organizational structures and processes exist that hinder or enhance integration across services, commands, and domains?
- What is an example of a gap in integration with regard to targeting, and how can it be mitigated or overcome?
- What obstacles to an actual whole-of-government approach to deterrence strategy exist?
- What are some approaches to integrating deterrence strategy with partners and allies?

I. Regional Deterrence

- Do historical concepts of deterrence and assurance apply in a regional context?
- There are major security challenges in the Middle East; spanning proxy wars, Islamic radicalization, terrorist threats, and tension between nuclear-capable India and Pakistan. Despite these challenges, what opportunities are available to improve the security situation and the role that deterrence and assurance might contribute?
- Considering the Russian escalate-to-win policy, what advantages and disadvantages might there be to the U.S. changing to a declaratory policy of no first-use?
- What are U.S. perceptions of China's no first-use policy with regard to credibility of their deterrence and credibility of their commitment to no first-use? How might India perceive it differently?
- What is the appropriate balance of conventional and nuclear capabilities to deter Russia and assure allies?

J. Space and Cyberspace

- Are space and cyberspace capabilities used differently than conventional or nuclear capabilities within a deterrence campaign, or are they essentially used in the same manner?
- What is the viability of integrating cyberspace capabilities into a deterrence toolkit?
- Should law enforcement responses to cyberspace intrusions/attacks help to inform the U.S. military procedures and responses? If yes, how?
- How might operations in space and cyberspace affect intended or unintended escalation?
- What constitutes sufficient intelligence to warrant U.S. military action/deterrence in response to adversary action in space or cyberspace? What are appropriate/acceptable levels of ambiguity or certainty?
- What are the challenges for deterring attacks on space capabilities (e.g., attribution, what constitutes an attack? and symmetry in response?)

K. Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)

- How can intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance be used to assure an ally or to deter a potential adversary?
- How do we balance the required secrecy inherent in the ISR mission with the need to be seen in order to achieve the desired assurance/deterrence effect?
- What is the deterrent effect of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) on adversaries, particularly Violent Extreme Organizations?

L. What cognitive and psychological aspects of adversaries, allies and the U.S. impact deterrence?

- How can we incorporate behavior and mental states into an assessment of deterrence and assurance?
- Do we consider how adversaries will adapt to new capabilities and strategies before we employ them?
- Are we allowing capabilities to drive strategies?
- Is deterrence more about an adversary's analysis of expected utility or is it more informed by behavioral economics and prospect theory?
- How does USSTRATCOM's position as a global strategic integrator impact deterrence efforts? What does this mean?

M. Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO)

- Can VEOs be deterred?
- Are VEOs a higher-level threat than a nuclear-capable state? Why or Why not?
- Are there deterrence strategies that could assist in preventing the increase of VEO recruiting?
- How might VEO activities act to destabilize a region or world and what are the resulting deterrence implications?